

Census estimates gain in minorities

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WASHINGTON — Racial and ethnic minorities accounted for roughly 85 percent of the nation's population growth over the last decade — one of the largest shares ever — with Hispanics accounting for much of the gain in many of the states picking up new House seats.

Preliminary census estimates also suggest the number of multiracial Americans jumped roughly 20 percent since 2000, to over 5 million.

The findings, based on fresh government survey data, offer a glimpse into 2010 census results that are being released on a state-by-state basis beginning this week. New Jersey, Mississippi, Virginia and Louisiana were the first to receive the census redistricting data, which will be used in the often contentious

process of redrawing political districts based on population and racial makeup.

The state numbers released Thursday reflected much of the racial change as well as the lingering impact of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated coastal populations in the South. For instance:

► Mississippi's most populous coastal county, Harrison, saw a small decrease in population following Katrina — the first time officials recall that it didn't grow.

► The number of Hispanics in Virginia nearly doubled, representing 7.9 percent of total residents. Non-Hispanic whites represented roughly 65 percent of the state's population, down from about 70 percent in 2000. Multiracial Americans make up 2.3 percent of the state's population.

► In New Jersey, the number of non-Hispanic whites shrunk 6.2 percent since 2000 and now represents 59 percent of the state's population. The Hispanic share of the state's population increased from 13 percent in 2000 to 18 percent.

"There are going to be a lot of additional Hispanic officials elected when redistricting is done," said E. Mark Braden, a former chief counsel to the Republican National Committee who now advises state governments on redistricting. "But folks in power

don't give up control that easily — there will be tension between the ins and outs."

By law, all states must receive their redistricting data by April 1.